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EXPLORING PROFESSIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL CAPABILITIES OF FINNISH FULBRIGHT RETURNEES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR FIELDS OF SPECIALIZATION IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT

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The constructive utilization of skills and competences acquired abroad, by academic and research returnees can be a significant determinant of the impact of internationalization. Nonetheless, it seems this aspect has not been quite considered in past research.

This study focuses on exploring the different mechanisms by which Finnish Fulbright returnees utilize and channel professional skills and intercultural competences gained from their studies in the United States, in promoting growth in their respective fields of specialization in Finland.

Building on a qualitative research approach, primary data for this study was generated from semi-structured interviews with some eight Finnish Fulbright returnees. The study applied the Capability Approach in analyzing the functionality of returnees' professional and intercultural capabilities in their fields of specialization.

The findings of the study illustrate that the Fulbright returnees had utilized their resources (*commodities*) and exerted the professional skills and intercultural competences (*capabilities*) which they gained in the U.S. at the time of their studies, in promoting growth in Finland through their work (*functionings*). Utilization and transfer of skills were mainly carried out in the academic and industrial domains, involving activities in teaching and research, and field related works respectively. Moreover, it was discovered that skills were transferred to colleagues, trainees, and to other companies. In the industry domain new skills and ideologies were said to be a greater factor contributing to sustainable development in fields of engineering and power system in Finland.

The study suggests the idea that adequate room be offered to returnees in their home country, to apply internationally acquired skills and knowledge through their works. And for the returnees, there is need to create collaborative linkages with employers and industries as a measure to promote development in relative fields in Finland.

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1. Introduction

This is the introductory section, representing the first out of six chapters constituting the thesis. The introduction provides an opening idea about the research, and is being segmented into sub topics that include; the background of the study, statement of the problem and research gap, objectives of the research, research questions, significance of study, scope of study, and the structure of thesis.

1.1. Background of study

A growing number of universities in the world have been engaged in internationalization for a long time now. The prevailing trend is of universities formulating efforts to achieve global understanding in students, by encouraging intercultural cognizance through cross border studies. Some examples of such initiatives adopted to encourage cross border studies and research worldwide include the Fulbright Program in the United States, and the Erasmus Mundus Program in Europe, with aim to encourage mutual understanding and foster collaboration among higher education institutions (OECD, 2012), in both developed and developing countries. Nevertheless, the United States has been the greatest destination for a vast number of international students as compared to other countries (Carswell, 2011). A number of studies conducted on the factors favoring the flow of international students in the U.S. indicate that English as a language of instruction has been an important factor in this aspect.

Finland, a Nordic country in Europe has been involved in international student mobility since the late 1980's (Suraj, 2014), whereby Finns travel to other countries for academic exchanges and vice versa through bilateral agreements and institutional partnerships with the respective nations. Despite that the Finnish language could stand as a hindrance to attracting international students in Finland, the country had established measures to address the condition; with higher education institutions teaching courses in foreign languages especially English (Garam, 2012).

While Finland is more interested in boosting its education and promoting diversity in cultures and languages (Finnish Ministry of Education and culture, 2017), international study mobility programs could be an advantage in this context. Studies on internationalization (See e.g., Teichler, 2002; King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Bracht et. Al., 2006) have shown that benefits of international studies are multifarious, ranging from new knowledge and skills acquisition,

linguistic improvement, intercultural experiences, etc. acquired as the students interact with persons from various countries and cultures.

In addition, a vast number of research on the benefits of international studies indicate that participants who immerse themselves in such studies benefit in the advancement of language skills, personal/ professional skills and competencies (Van Hoof and Verbeeten, 2005; Crossman and Clarke, 2009; Gu et al, 2015; Lesjak et al, 2015; Trower et al, 2017; Curtis and Ledgerwood, 2018). Regarding the impact of internationalization, particular attention is often inclined to the contributions of study abroad to career success (Johnson and Kaufman, 2005). For instance, a study conducted on the career prospects and outcomes of U.S. educated international students by the World Education Service (WES, 2017), hold that career factors are a top motivation for foreign students in U.S. institutions. Reason why higher education institutions in the U.S. are more concerned with enhancing and promoting career potentials of foreign students (WES, 2017).

Nevertheless, researchers like Shaftel, Shaftel, & Ahluwalia allege the worth of study abroad programs in knowledge and comprehensive advancement of intercultural skills that facilitate the promotion of personal and societal development. Building on their idea, this thesis is concerned with the utilization of intercultural competences and professional skills to advance development in the home country of Fulbright graduates.

Given that the trend of globalization has brought cultural diversity in most countries in the world today, educational institutions are more internationally oriented. Studies on internationalization have often related internationally achieved skills and competences to how far they are being utilized in job settings. For instance, Kimberlyn Franklin conducted a study on some 52 U.S. students who had studied abroad, in order to determine the long-term impact of their studies abroad on their career and professional lives. It appeared the graduates professionally exerted their intercultural competencies gained from studying abroad in achieving career success. Parallel with this a research by Coleman & Chafer(2011), on the long term impact of study abroad by European students in Senegal, West Africa found that the students had built “attitudes and subsequent career choices” out of the intercultural skills they acquired in Senegal(Coleman & Chafer, 2011 p.20). It is therefore of worth to investigate how graduates utilize intercultural and professional skills acquired from studies abroad in building their field of specialization in their home country.

1.2. Problem Statement

There already exist a considerable amount of research on higher education internationalization including student mobility as seen in the works of researchers like Altbach & Knight, (2007); Knight (2004), (2008), (2013), (2015); and publications by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013, 2015, and 2016.

Moreover, substantial information and strategies about internationalization in various countries are spelt out in their national planning documents (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015, 2017; Australian government, 2016; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2014; Global Affairs Canada, 2014;) and more. While a typical outcome of internationalization of education is the production of graduates who are competent in intercultural affairs (Deardorff, 2004), it is hard to determine how the graduates further implement these competences practically. Research in this context is often carried out forthwith the graduates' completion of their program abroad. As such, most studies about the impact of international studies are centered at the acquisition of skills and knowledge, and personal and professional developments (Van Hoof and Verbeeten, 2005; Crossman and Clarke, 2009; Gu et al, 2015; Lesjak et al, 2015; Trower et al, 2017; Curtis and Ledgerwood, 2018). At the end, students who participated in international studies evaluate their involvement at universities by gauging their experiences with ensuing significant professions (WES, 2017). Only few studies have all the way researched the long term outcomes of studies abroad, in the context of its contribution to societal development and its influence to social changes. It is worth mentioning that the few studies conducted in this context are relatively about developing countries.

For instance, (Pham, 2016; Truong, 2017) and others with focus in Asian countries. Pham (2016) while exploring the transformative potential of international education for Vietnamese overseas graduates and their community discussed the different kinds of skills, knowledge, attributes and attitudes that Vietnamese students obtained in their studies abroad, and how they went further to implement them in the development of Vietnam. Similarly, Truong (2017) in her work on academic returnee's knowledge transfer in Vietnam, concluded that academics who had studied abroad were motivated and could transfer some amount of knowledge (explicit and tacit) to their home country mainly through teaching and research. She also identified some factors that hindered the process of

adequate knowledge transfer to Vietnam by the returnees; these are mainly related to policies and regulations.

Moreover, a vast amount of research have proven that international studies significantly contribute to building employment potentials of students, considering that the rationale for international higher education targets to train and prepare students as future leaders and citizens who can provide solutions to global challenges and problems within societies. Knight (2006) assert that international education prepares students to get involved in shaping sustainable development, international solidarity and global peace in a highly interdependent globalized world. Nevertheless, there are little or no studies to prove that the graduates actually perform such duties to enhance their societies. The Organization of Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD, 2012) takes a look into the ‘current economic climate’ of its member countries, and has requested that the tangible benefits of internationalization of higher education for the economies and societies be properly researched.

In response to education export and internationalization, the Finnish government intends to make Finland an open and international country that is rich in languages and cultures by 2025 (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). In this light, focus has been to increase knowledge and skills by emphasizing the internationalization of higher education and research. While Finland has been for a long time involved in exporting its education and research, through several international and mobility programs, including government partnership programs, bilateral programs with several countries in various continents, with different foreign institutions and more, a very common bilateral program between Finland and the United States is the Fulbright. Finland had entered into partnership with the U.S. Fulbright program since the 1960s. A significant number of Finnish students and researchers have participated in this program by enrolling into U.S. universities in America. In the same way, American students and researchers have been enrolled into Finnish universities through this medium. The program has enriched the participants in terms of knowledge and skills acquisition.

Driving out of the human capital context, internationalization has become apparent as a force for advancing constructive and peculiar indicators to employers in a globalized context (Fong, 2011). Thus, Fulbright graduates holding skills in different fields, knowledge of some languages, competencies in cultures, and values, achieved during their term in the United States, have a prospective for employment in or out of their home country. Nonetheless, how

the returnees utilize those skills and knowledge in their work practices and in promoting the development of their field of specialization in Finland, is unknown.

1.3. Objectives of study and research questions

The purpose of this research is to determine the significance of Fulbright program to the Finnish society. It looks into the practical processes by which the graduates transfer professional skills and intercultural competences to their work. This is done by examining the transmission factors that facilitates the practical utilization of their professional skills and competences to promote growth in different sectors in Finland. The following research questions serve as a guide to achieving these objectives;

1. How corresponding are professional skills and intercultural competences acquired by Finnish Fulbright students during their Fulbright term in the U.S. to their field of specialization?
2. How do the returnees transfer those skills and competences to advance growth in their fields of specialization in Finland?
3. What are the challenges encountered by the returnees when utilizing and transferring skills to fields of specialization?

Answering research question one gives information on the relevance of professional skills, intercultural competences and values acquired in the U.S. to the works of the returnees in Finland. The aim of research question two is to provide an understanding on the transformative potential of Fulbright Program in fostering development in the field of specialization of Fulbright returnees, in Finland. While research question three provides understanding about available and potential challenges that could impede the process of skills and competence transfer and utilization by the Finnish returnees in Finland.

1.3. Significance of research

The focus of this research is about the impact of higher education internationalization, but is narrowed specifically to the impact of Fulbright program to the development of returnees' fields of specialization in Finland. The study adding to the few that have researched the impact of higher education internationalization on returnees' home country will serve as source for future research in this subject. Organizers or board members of the Fulbright program including the entire Fulbright community will get informed of the wider impact of this program not only to the lives of participants but also to the entire society in which they

live. In this way it will be possible to assess whether the impact of the program correlates with its goals and objectives. Such awareness will drive the program organizers to set strategies and measures for enhancement.

1.5. Structure of thesis

The thesis is structured into six different chapters. Each chapter focusing on a particular interest; Chapter one is about the general introduction of the thesis and draws the reader’s attention to the phenomenon of internationalization and its benefits to the lives of graduates. In chapter two, the concept of internationalization is discussed in detail beginning with the evolution of the phenomenon with focus in Europe and Finland in particular. The chapter proceeds with identifying the forces that drive internationalization of students from Finland to other countries and vice versa. However, emphasis is made on the Fulbright program. Chapter three presents a theory and analytical framework that facilitates the comprehension of the process of utilization professional skills and intercultural competences to promote growth in some fields in Finland. The next, chapter four describes the methodology of the research. It presents the method and instrument used in collecting data and in answering the research questions. Chapter five presents the analysis of data with the aid of theoretical and analytical frameworks, and a discussion about the results. Chapter six concludes the study and presents recommendations for further studies.

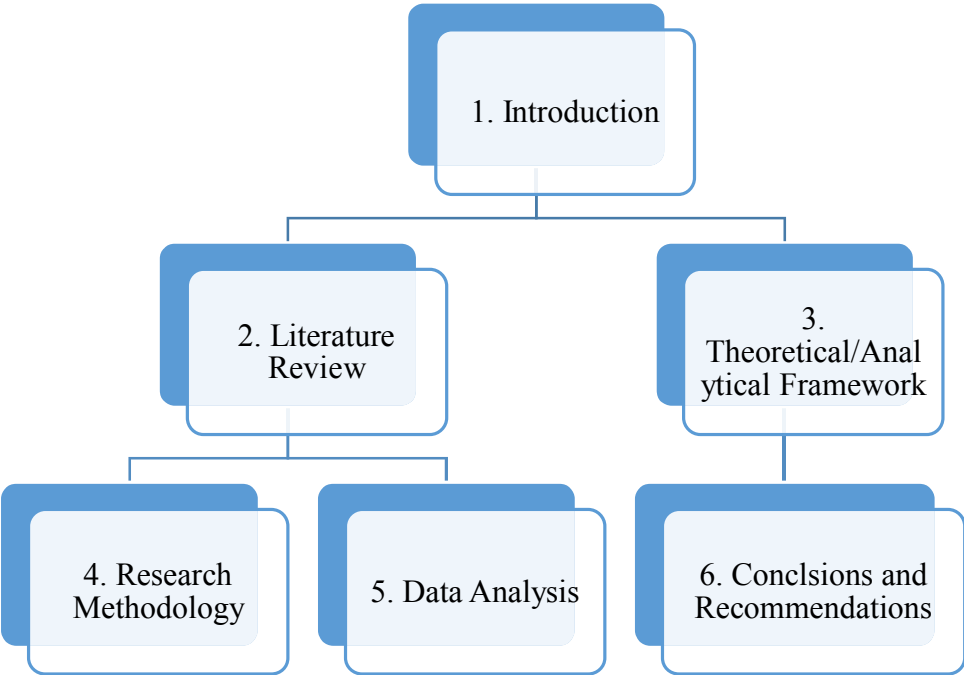


Figure 1; Structure of Thesis

Summary

In Chapter one, the author has presented a glimpse about the concept of internationalization in the higher education milieu, while identifying the Fulbright program in particular as an area of attention for this thesis. Yet, the study is significant to the Finnish Fulbright returnees and the channels by which they utilize and transfer skills and competences in their various fields of specialization. The researcher has devised two research questions that would aid in this study; i). What are the contributions of Fulbright Graduates to the Finnish Society?

ii). How do the returnees transfer professional skills and intercultural competences acquired during their Fulbright term in the United States, to advance growth in their field of specialization in Finland?. Furthermore, the research gap has been identified, by connecting to some previous studies related to the topic of internationalization and competence transfer by returnees. However, the author has clearly defined the main concepts of the study *competence*, and has also thrown more light on *intercultural competences* which along with *professional skills* are the concern for this thesis. These concepts are examined from the perspectives of some key researchers and their theories. And in conclusion, chapter one ends with the outline and structure of this thesis document which is presented in descriptive and in diagram.

With Chapter one being an introduction to the study, the subsequent part which is Chapter two encompasses more detail on the topic of internationalization in Europe, and in Finland and lay focus on the rationale for internationalization, while examining some factors that promote internationalization. This is done by reviewing some existing literature on the topics. Furthermore, the chapter will give light on the Participation of Finland in the Fulbright program.

2. Literary review

The chapter focuses on the review of literature on the history of internationalization, and forces responsible for higher education internationalization. Also, an overview of the Fulbright program in the context of Finland is being presented in this chapter.

2.1. Rationales for Internationalization

Internationalization as a global trend has contributed to higher education in the area of academics and research. The estimate count of students pursuing studies out of their home countries keeps increasing every time. According to the UNESCO, the addition in the number of international students may add up to 7 million in the year 2020. This can be explained from that, during the past 50 years, several universities in North America and Europe expanded their international education and research networks (Halangescu, 2015). But what is internationalization about? Internationalization could be (categorised) in two different ways; internationalization at home, and internationalization abroad (Knight, 2004). For Wachter (2003), internationalization at home refers to teaching and learning processes that involve dimensions of internationalization at local higher education institutions. This also means admitting international students in local universities, institutional linkages and networks, development projects, and branch campuses (Knight, 2004), that is on one hand. On the other hand, internationalization abroad includes study and research exchange programs.

Although internationalization is an old phenomenon in higher education (Wit, 2002), its aims have evolved with time. The governments of Europe have drawn extensive internationalization rules that indeed cater to a variety of rationales (Huisman and Van der Wende 2004). Furthermore, Knight (2004) categorize the rationales for internationalization into four groups; social and cultural, political, economic, and academic.

Social and cultural: In this domain, countries participate in internationalization to boost their cultural identity. Therefore, students from foreign countries may get involve in study abroad to acquire a diversified understanding of different cultures and life styles. Moreover, studying abroad will develop social skills of participants and can eventually foster community development in the home countries of participants.

Political: Internationalization in this aspect provide policy linkages between home and foreign countries, guarantee national security, provide foreign technical assistance to

countries, established peaceful relationships and mutual understanding between countries and regions.

Economic: It is no doubt that internationalization provides economic benefits to both the host and home countries. The process of internationalization is a means to attract brilliant and talented students to developed countries. The students upon completing their studies may get employed in the job market, and therefore play a role in advancing the economic development of the foreign country. Meanwhile, the developing countries encounter rise in economy when the internationally trained citizen return home and make use of new knowledge and skills acquired from international studies abroad. Furthermore, the movement of international students is a remarkable financial source of higher education institutions in many countries. For instance, according to the university United Kingdom Report (2017), the country experienced an ample benefit from international students as the students added some £25.8 billion to the economy.

Academic: Internationalization also improves and increases the quality of research and teaching, prestige and international recognition of higher education institutions.

Despite the above mentioned, a great number of studies have argued that the rationales for globalization and internationalization vary nationally, locally, and even institutionally (Seeber, et al 2016; Zilber 2008; Pedersen & Dobbin 2006; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Douglass 2005)

2.2. Factors responsible for higher education internationalization

Choosing a study destination depends on a number of factors such as the host country, the type and quality of programs, language(s) of instruction, the cost of study and many others. Aspects favouring internationalization could possibly fall under the categories of pull and push factors (Altbach, 2004). On the one hand, “Pull” in this context denote a state of attraction. Therefore pull factors of internationalization are those characteristics, forces, and drives in the foreign institutions that attract students to leave their home universities and study abroad. In most cases, these factors of attraction are absent or scarce in the students’ home universities. Thus, the desire to achieve them elsewhere. More also, pull factors not only pertain to certain characteristics of host institutions but also involve political, social, and economic situations of host countries. Push factors on the other hand are the characteristics, conditions and situations in the home country of students that prevent them from acquiring the best education they desire. These are such reasons that make the students feel unfulfilled in their home universities.

2.2.1. Pull and Push reasons

A. Reasons pertaining to Language(s) of instruction

One of the reasons students pursue studies abroad is because of the language of instruction. Developed countries like the United States, Australia, and United Kingdom likely attract international students due to their use of English language in instruction (Altbach and Knight, 2007). Nonetheless, other great countries including Germany, France, and Russia are also known for recruiting high number of international students despite that they are countries with different national languages than English. The percentage of international students hosted by the later countries constitutes just 14 percent of the global international student body (OECD, 2015). Students might be taught some of these languages at their home institutions, yet they find it necessary to increase the comprehension of those languages abroad. Moreover, some countries had introduced English Taught Programs (ETP) at universities. Such European countries include Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands (OECD, 2015). Nevertheless, the increase interest in English in instruction happens to endanger some other national languages (Pérez-Llantada, 2018). With this, there is bound to be high competition between native English countries and those practicing English Taught Programs given that English language is the preference for communication

in the scientific community (Altbach 2007). As such, English becomes the principal language in promoting internationalization (Pérez-Llantada, 2018).

B. Reasons relating to Quality of Universities, Programs, and Tuition

Another important determinant of students' choice to study abroad is the access to quality education programs in reputable universities, then the affordability.

Quality

The quality of a university is another factor that drives the desire to study abroad. University rankings are a medium to attract students to international reputable programs (Knight, 2011). A study by Chen (2007) discovered that the factors about the quality, reputation, and rankings of a university were valuable to international students than study programs. Such reputable universities offer adequate assistance, and available campus support (Norton, 2008), detailed supervision, and good facilities (e.g., quality library resources) for international students. Given the availability of such facilities, students would live a comfortable study life and their academic performances are bound to be improved. Therefore, the reputation of a university can possibly stand as a high factor determining the choice for international study destination. In another light, institutions with a great number of international students and staff are perceived to be of high quality.

Programs

Students may also prefer to study abroad because they lack quality programs in their home universities. In this light they are pushed to leave their home universities to find suitable programs abroad (Altbach, 2004). Even though their home countries possess reputed universities as well, there is bound to be scramble for admission into such universities and at the end not everyone is given the chance to study. Seeking for study places in prestigious institutions abroad becomes the solution. Moreover, the inability of home universities especially in developing countries to offer courses and study programs in some areas of specialization that interest students force them to study in foreign universities offering such programs abroad (Altbach, 2004).

Tuition

Another factor that triggers students' intention to study abroad is the presence of financial assistance, which could be grants, loans and scholarships (Macready & Tucker, 2011). While tuition fees serve a meaningful dimension of education cost for most international

programs, it is crucial that students evaluate their financial worth before considering a study destination as these aspects vary in different countries and study programs. For instance the National Student Fee and Support Systems in European Higher Education clearly outline fees and financial supports for every EU countries in different years. However, policies on study fees have been inconstant. A remarkable number of European countries receive tuition fee from foreign students who are non EU/EEA citizens. Some countries have newly introduced tuition fees and others have increased the cost (Kuronen & Mansikkamäki, 2017).

For instance, the OECD (2013) report on Sweden's introduction of tuition fee for international students in 2011. Finland also did same in 2017 after a trial in 2010. But, raising the cost of tuition out turn to reduced number of international students. Northern Countries like Sweden, Denmark, and Finland all faced a similar decline in the number of enrolled international students subsequently to the enforcement of tuition fee (Kuronen & Mansikkamäki, 2017). That notwithstanding, the countries raised the amount of scholarships and study grants for international students as a measure to attract more students. It has been noted that students go for scholarships and financial aids when applying for study programs abroad.

Contrasting to the above, in some cases tuition fee do not stand as barrier for international students to study out of their home country. The quality of programs and degrees offered, including the guarantee for subsequent employment are believed to be equivalent to the financial expenses (OECD 2013). Countries like New Zealand, Australia, and the United States still boost of recruiting a vast amount of international students despite their introduction of tuition fee for foreign students. Yet as already mentioned above, English Language being the language of instruction in these countries can be a huge contribution to this phenomenon.

C. Immigration and Visa reasons

One of the benefits of international student mobility is that students have the chance to stay in their host country upon graduation (Vannozzi, 2014). Most countries have moderated immigration policies to facilitate international students' stay either temporary or permanently. Australia for instance had introduced a policy since 2001, which permits international students to live permanently in the country considering that they apply for residency within a given time of 6 months after finishing their studies in Australian universities. This is to enable them find employment in the country (ITA, 2016). Canada and

New Zealand are not exceptions. Students from foreign countries are given the opportunity to work along with studying, and even are eligible to apply for residence permit on work basis for up to 2 years. For New Zealand, there are policies encouraging international students who specialized in fields with less man power in the country to remain and work in New Zealand after completing their studies (ITA, 2016). While most countries obligate that foreign students secure jobs related to their field of study before they can be issued permits to stay after graduation, the case is different for Canada. Conditions are eased for graduates intending to work in Canada to possibly apply and obtain the Canadian citizenship.

D. Cultural/ Socio political reasons

According to OECD (2004), internationalization provides a great opportunity for students to improve knowledge in various fields and societies, to understand different cultures and study professional approaches, and to improve their employment potentials. Lewis (2016) conducted a study to determine factors that favour the choice of international students to study abroad. The results of his study identified cultural factors to have a significant influence in this aspect. Such cultural factors include “learning about another country’s culture, experiencing another country’s education system, increasing knowledge of different places, studying in a location where the respondent’s ancestors are from”(Lewis, 2016; p.71). Cabrera and Renard (2015) on their part emphasize that universities need to restructure their programs and teach attitudes and skills including intercultural communication, as well as problem solving skills in order to enhance international graduates’ functionality at the time of their studies, and after graduation.

Furthermore, there are social and political factors that could cause students to choose to study in particular countries abroad. Examples of these factors are escape from political control and issues, strikes and protests at universities and the shutdown of institutions (Altbach, 2004).

2.3. Some Challenges of internationalization

There are a number of issues arising from internationalization of higher education. The processes of hiring international student and staff, creating linkages with international programs and universities, desiring for global accreditation and quality assurance systems, involve various challenges that result from doing things beyond the local context (Yung-chi Hou, 2014). Hao et al(2016), in their study examining the ”employment opportunities and challenges facing high-skilled Chinese returnees” discovered it became difficult for the

Australia educated returnees' to adapt to the rapid changing society of China, and regain their understanding of the Chinese culture. Findings of their study further suggest that returnees should utilize their professional skills and knowledge while taking into account the context of their local country, and possibly create collaborations with local practitioners and employees, and other local personalities including the members of government.

Considering the necessity for quality assurance in international studies, organizations like the OECD, World Bank, and UNESCO had set some principles to reinforce quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications schemes at both national and international levels (CHEA, 2002). According to these principles, students are to be safeguarded 'from the risks of misinformation, low-quality provision and qualifications of limited validity' in cross-border higher education (Yung-chi Hou, 2014). In the guidelines, the leading quality assurance and accreditation agencies are expected to intensify their international cooperation with other agencies, and develop strategies to cover transnational higher education within national qualification schemes (OECD 2005). With increasing cross-border higher education, the demand to review the quality of international programs and institutions has pressured national quality agencies to upgrade their level of international capacity as well as to enhance real collaborations between agencies and countries.

Furthermore, global linkages have increased the economic interdependence between countries and this facilitated the spread of the crisis (OECD, 2010). While the rise in international students and researchers mobility in countries have added to internationalization of technology, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010) identified challenges to internationalization in the field of technology specifically to fast growing China and India. The worry is how countries could protect local investments in research and development (R&D) while maintaining linkages with international research centers.

Moreover, Yonezawa & Shimmi (2015) questioned the ability of internationalization strategies by governments in transforming university governance in East Asian higher education. Focusing on Japanese universities, the authors assert that because the system has a high reliance on its local R&D resources and university reforms to reach internationalization, there will possibly be some challenges and limits for the universities to be internationally competitive (Yonezawa & Shimmi, 2015).

2.4. Internationalization in Finland

Internationally, the Finnish education is known to be of great quality due to its progressive success in the PISA exams organized for primary school students (Schatz, 2015). Nevertheless higher education internationalization is a phenomenon that has taken place in Finland for a long time. There has been enough efforts made to internationalize the Finnish higher education institutions (Suraj, 2014), mainly to attract international students to study in favorable conditions in Finland. Hölttä (2007) outlined the types of activities involved in the internationalization of Finnish higher education institutions. First, the traditional individual-based mobility. Second, being internationalization based on bilateral institutional agreements. Third, being program-based internationalization. Fourth, internationalization based on institutional and disciplinary networks. While fifth, being the market-oriented internationalization (Cai & Kivistö, 2013).

Finland had attracted international students through its no fee policy for foreigners. However in 2015, the Ministry of Education implemented a strategy to receive tuition fee from international students who are non EU and EEA citizens in Finland. Even though there have been arguments as to whether the introduction of tuition fee for international students in Finland will reduce the amount of foreign students coming in to study in Finland, Finnish universities have a variety of scholarships for international students.

Furthermore, some scholars including Suraj (2014) assert that the high quality of education and research in Finland is a plus for the country to achieve its long term success plan that is built on investing in the education sector and the preservation of its efficiency. In connection to this, Finland, while aiming to become one of the world's leading education based economies had developed a long-term strategy to be "open and international, rich in languages and cultures by 2025(Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). The purpose for this strategy is to internationalize education and research.

Like other Nordic countries, internationalization policies in Finland have introduced English Language course in as a means to promote international student mobility (Airey et al. 2017; Wächter and Maiworm 2014) as cited in the work of (Saarinen and Rontu, 2018). The current dominating actors in the field (such as England, Australia, and USA) have long-term experiences with disseminating educational systems since the era of colonization (Schatz, 2015).

2.5. Finland's participation in the Fulbright program

The U.S. is one most popular country that hosts a larger number of international students (ITA, 2016). A report by IIE (2014) indicates that the U.S. hosted the highest percentage

22% of all international students. International mobility programs like the Fulbright Program contribute to a greater extent in facilitating the flow of foreign students and researchers in the United States. U.S. Fulbright Student Program participants constitute a distinct group of international students.

Factors that guarantee selection or participation of foreign students in the Fulbright program include academic excellence and related professional experience (IIE, 20016). Even though Finland is a less considered Fulbright destination by U.S students as compared to other European countries (Fulbright U.S. Student Program, 2017), a large number of Finns have participated in the Fulbright program since 1949. According to the Fulbright Finland Foundation (2018), a total number of 5500 Finnish citizens and Americans have been issued grants for the Fulbright program between Finland and America from the year 1949, which marked the birth of academic and research exchanges between Finland and North America. The U.S. Fulbright Student Program is a renowned program with features of the American culture and lifestyle. These, coupled with the use of English, which is a globally spoken language in the world, in instruction could possibly attract a mass population of foreign students to the U.S. Fulbright Student Program.

As a measure to promote graduates return, governments have set some restrictions on visa and residence permit for international students in the U.S. Shulamit & MacGarvie(2013) recount the instances where foreign students at U.S. institutions have to return home after completing their studies as they are issued J-1 type visas. Other countries have more liberal immigration policies that provide a pathway to remaining in the country after finishing a course of study (ITA, 2016). Canada as an example has recently eased the conditions for students to apply for Canadian citizenship by reducing the residency requirement and counting part of study time. Finland is a great country in terms of education, however as many students believe that education from the United States will boost their job prospects at home (ITA, 2016), a number of Finnish students travel to the U.S. for studies. Considering that migration of qualified students is an investment in human capital, such returns may outweigh costs and provide a brain gain to the migrants' country of origin through return migration (Istaiteyeha & Knerr, 2011). For instance, a study by Istaityeha and Knerr (2011) on international students from Jordan proved that the return on investment on the human capital and the brain return of Jordanian PhD graduates resulted into economic gains to Jordan, through attracting international students, where in the end those international students contributed in transforming Jordan's higher education sector from development assistance to an export commodity.

On the other hand, some researchers attest the fact that skillful returnees could add to economic growth in their home countries despite living abroad (Kahn & MacGarvie, 2013). However, because of brain circulation, skilled graduates increasingly contribute to both the host and home countries. In their study “Do return requirements increase international knowledge diffusion? Evidence from the Fulbright program”, Kahn and MacGarvie (2016) examined the effects of international Fulbright scientific researchers who returned home after their studies in the U.S. according to the results the scientists rather focused on the scientific works in their home countries than the foreign countries. They further assert that despite the lack of quality science base in those countries, the returnees contributed to the research of their countries, even though not to a greater amount.

Summary

In this chapter, the author has discussed the rationales for internationalization in accordance with the four categories of Knight (2004), involving social and cultural, political, economic, and academic. Moreover, the factors or reasons for internationalization are looked into. These factors fall in two groups which are; push and pull factors. I have discussed under the groups some main reasons that favor the inbound or outbound of students and researchers such as language of instruction, quality and choice of study program, visa and immigration factors, and socio-cultural factors. The chapter also presented in brief the notion of internationalization in Finland, and some challenges. The chapter concludes with literature about Finnish students’ participation in Fulbright studies in the U.S.

Chapter two was a literature review, on some basic concepts; internationalization, Fulbright program, Finnish students involvement in Fulbright program in the United States. An understanding of these notions would facilitate a comprehension of the forth chapter on the theoretical framework for this study. Thus, chapter three discusses the Capability Approach of Sen (1985) as a framework for this research, and also conceptualize the theory in the context of Fulbright program.

3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework is discussed. It provides an overview of the theoretical considerations of this study on professional and intercultural capabilities of Finnish Fulbright returnees in the development of their fields of specialization in Finland. It is as well worth to provide an explanation about its application in different studies by researchers, and conceptualize the terms to the context of this research.

This study employs the capability approach of Sen (1985) to convey a better understanding of how Finnish Fulbright returnees transform their professional and intercultural skills acquired in the United States during their Fulbright term, to contribute to the development of their field of specialization in Finland. It guides the author to understand the transformation potentials of skills and competences (Professional and intercultural), to the society. Therefore, it is concerned with the process of transforming inputs into out puts, and out puts into outcomes.

3.1. The Capability Approach of Sen (1985)

The Capability Approach (CA) of Sen was developed in 1985, in the fields of economics and philosophy. The theory is mostly used in the context of human development, and is concern with the importance of a person's moral ability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value. The capability approach stress that every human being possess unique capabilities to transform goods and services into valuable achievements because of personal, social, and locational arrangements in their lives (Sen, 1985).

The CA is a normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements, and proposals about social changes in society (Robeyns, 2003), it also adopt forms of capabilities, which could be applied in various contexts (Sen, 1985). As this approach refers to human beings as ends of development process and not means of development (Sen, 1999), its application in this study will provide a better understanding of internationalization of higher education and its role in development. Furthermore, Sen (1999) asserts that development is the proliferation of a person's freedom or capability. That is, the ability of a person to do and to be what he/she values (Pham, 2016). Amartya Sen, maintain that the emphasis of the CA on human development, and economic outcomes are useful if they can supply individuals the possibilities to live, and do things the way they value (Sen 1999).

Scholars like Arnove (2010) claim that one important constituent of development is education, because it could be used to direct individuals and can supply them the possibility to view things from the world's perspective. Education as well can provide people the potential to act in situations, and propose solutions that could ameliorate conditions in lives and societies according to their objectives. In addition, Sen (1999) consider interest in the interpersonal impact of education, given that individuals are able to utilize the benefits of their education to assist other people and also to contribute to the development of society in which they live. Hence, the CA is appropriate to examine the contributions of international education for developing the field of specialization of graduates and the society at large, in such that the education values of graduates are not deduced to only financial values. This study reasons on moving international education and research to the direction of wider outcomes exceeding economic benefits.

The CA is examined by comparing the Resources, the Capability, and Functionings otherwise referred to here as Utility;

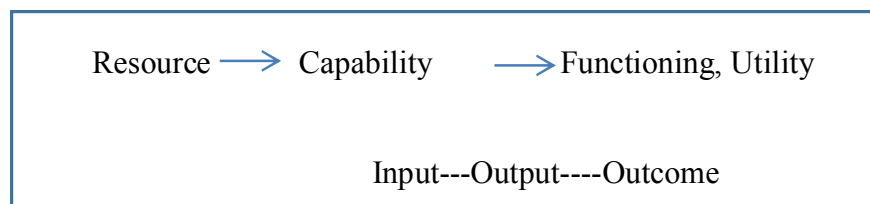


Figure 2; Measurement of the CA. *Source; (Sen, 1985)*

3.1.1. Concepts of the Capability Approach

The CA is comprised of the following concepts;

Functioning

Clark, (2006) while conceptualizing the terms of the CA, defined functioning as “an achievement of a person” (Clark, 2006, p.4), referring to what a person is and has done. To achieve a functioning, one has to possess a number of commodities that depends on factors such as personal and social. A functioning is how useful individuals make of the commodities at their disposal (Clark, 2006). In her work, on measuring the CA and well-being for public policy, Alkire(2015, p. 3) describes functionings as ”beings and doings that people value and have reason to value”. Therefore, functionings can refer to accomplishments that are beneficial to people in different ways.

Capability

While a functioning refers to the end product of what a person does, the ability used to achieve the outcome is called capability. Therefore capability refers to human ability to achieve a functioning (Saith, 2001). Furthermore, Capability refers to available real opportunities in a particular context or need, thus indicators of development.

Although the CA of Sen (1985) has been used majorly in the context of economics, human development (Clark, 2006) and poverty reduction, in 2016 Pham applied a framework that combined the Agency- focused capability approach of Sen (1985), and Bourdieu's concepts of Habitus, Capital, Field and Reflexive Sociology in analyzing the transformative potential of study abroad for Vietnamese graduates and their communities. Therefore, applying the framework to this study that focuses on higher education internationalization could not be very stressful. Furthermore, the capability approach stresses that students have the ability to use the benefits of their education in assisting themselves and other people to contribute to democratic freedom and the overall good of society (Sen, 1999). The theory is used to determine the agency of graduates in transferring the professional and intercultural skills acquired during their Fulbright term in the U.S., to their works and contribution to development in their field of specialization in Finland, because the capability approach assert that individuals are agents who make choices and take actions in the process of development (Crocker, 2008) and (Robeyns 2005) and (Sen, 1999). This framework is also employed to determine the level of participation of Fulbright graduates in the development of their field of specialization in Finland since the theory demonstrates that the major objective of development is the expansion of human capabilities rather than economic growth. All in all, its emphasis on human and their capability to attain valuable functioning is to a greater extent related to the aims of this study.

Conceptualizing CA in the context of Fulbright program

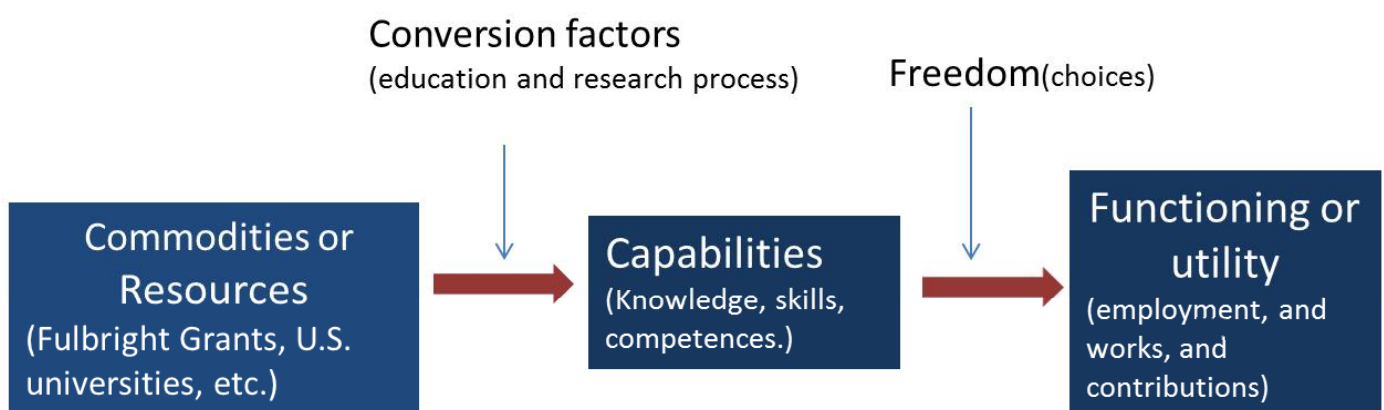


Figure 3: The Capability Approach of Sen(1985) in the context of Fulbright program

In this study, commodities signify available resources that facilitate the conversion process to capabilities. Therefore, in the context of “how Finnish Fulbright returnees utilize and transfer of skills to promote development of their fields of specialization...” resources or commodities would stand for financial resources, environmental factors, and educational facilities. The Fulbright Student Program and research programs provide a given amount of grants to students and researchers for the duration of their term abroad. The incoming Fulbrighters are enrolled in such Universities in the United States that specializes in their field of expertise. This means that the students hold the financial, environmental, and educational resources.

The concept of Capability is applied to this study to represent the various kinds of skills, knowledge and attributes gained from studies abroad by the Fulbright graduates. These are categorized into professional skills, intercultural competences, and social values.

Functioning in this context refers to the further utilization of the acquired knowledge, skills and competences. Functionings would only happen in the field of work. For instance, when one is employed. It should be taken into consideration that employment on itself is not a functioning; this means that the duties and work performed when employed are what represents functioning. Nevertheless, functionings are not only achieved as a result of employment but they could be carried out by anyone whether employed, self-employed or unemployed, as long as work is being done.

3.2. Key Concepts

3.2.1. Competence

To provide an apt understanding of the term competence, it is important to look at the four approaches to competence provided by Bowden & Marton (1998).

First, the behaviorist approach which represents the performance and behaviour of a person, at his work. Then the additive approach that separately involve the utilization of knowledge and performance. Next, the integrative approach that closely combines performance and knowledge. Lastly, the holistic approach of competence involving integrated competence and the person's knowledge, perception and understanding. Therefore, competence represents “the capabilities of seeing and handling novel situations in powerful ways, and

capabilities that frequently integrate disciplinary and professional knowledge” (Bowden & Marton 1998; p. 113-114), which is acquired in educational institutions or at work place. Mindful that the students’ educational and work environments can greatly influence their progress in terms of competences (Massot & Feisthammel, 2003), Bowden & Marton connect the meaning of competence to its practical role and application at work. Some other researchers like Havelock et al (1995), refer to competence as the different actions people take to resolve issues arising in various contexts.

Moreover, competence in a semiotic perspective is much related to performance. Greimas, the author of semiotic theory derived the terms *competence and performance* from Chomsky’s language theory (Pikkarainen, 2014). Greimas identified some modalities for dimensions of competence. These include skills, knowledge, attitudes and other variables. He further classified competence into two levels; semantic and modal competence. Semantic competence on one hand refers to actions that occur by chance. In this category the environments in which those actions take place play a role in effecting the actions. The modal competence on the other hand is concern with the “modalization” of any semantic competence (Pikkarainen, 2014), therefore, the interest in doing something, the intention to do it, the ability to do it, and the awareness and knowledge to do it. Greimas has named these as i) Wanting, ii) Having to, iii) Being able, and iv) Knowing

3.2.2. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes about different cultures. In his work on researching how intercultural competence could be assessed as an outcome of internationalization, Deardorff (2004) defined the term as “the effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations. Intercultural competence involves intricate abilities that are required for better performance and interactions with people from different cultures and linguistic background (Fantini, 2006; OECD, 2018). Furthermore, in 2007 the Council of Europe set some eight key competences including intercultural competences, that are able to promote a favorable life within the knowledge society. They identified the components of intercultural competence to involve those attitudes which help people to integrate in the social and work life, and in diversified societies, and be able to tackle issues arising from interactions with different people and societies (European Communities, 2007). Although there are vast number of meanings and definitions attributed to intercultural competence, researchers have not been able to identify a mutual definition to the term (Deardorff, 2011).

Models of intercultural competence

In conceptualizing intercultural competence Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) came up with five models of intercultural competence that include the following;

- i) *Compositional*: These models possess various components of competence. For instance; The pyramid and process models of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009)

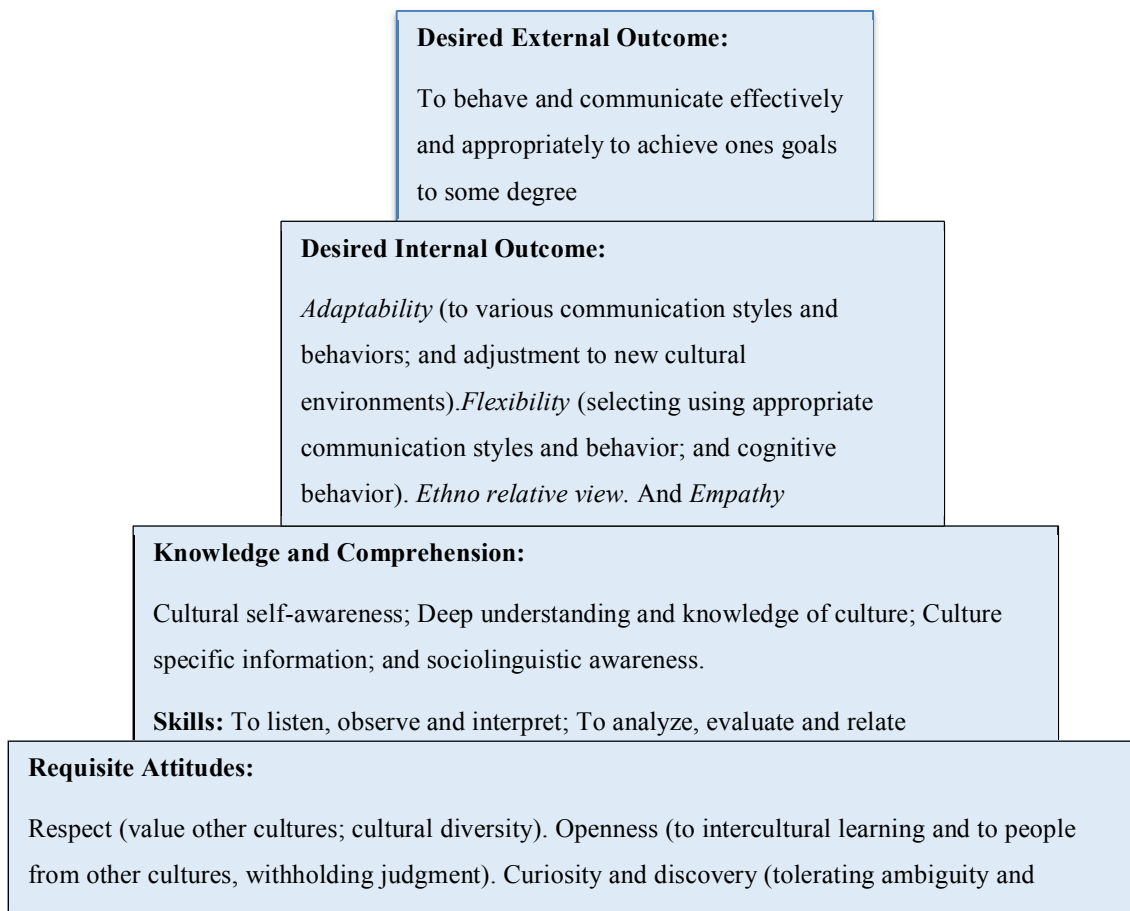


Figure 4; The pyramid model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009)

Source, Deardorff(2006)

- i) Co-orientational: They deal with interactional ideas
- ii) Developmental: represent stages in progression
- iii) Adaptational: involve the act of correction by independent players
- iv) Causal process: they make available a linear pathway that can be verified using some concepts to prove their fit for empirical findings

Building on Deardorff's model of intercultural competence above, the following variables are identified. *Attitudes*: respect, openness, curiosity and discovery. In order to comprehend

and understand different cultures, one has to be open to knowledge and information about those cultures. An important aspect here is that of communication. It is vital to show some level of value for other cultures when interacting with the people through communication. *Knowledge*: These include cultural self-awareness (meaning the ways in which one's culture has influenced one's identity and worldview), culture-specific knowledge, deep cultural knowledge including understanding other world views, and sociolinguistic awareness. *Skills*: about the processing of knowledge. They include observation, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating. *Internal Outcomes*: involve flexibility, adaptability, an ethno relative perspective and empathy. They are the result of acquired attitudes, knowledge and skills in an individual. One indicator of this outcome is the ability of a person to view things from the perspectives of others, and also to effectively respond to them in accordance to the desires of other people. It is not clear to what level this could be achieved, yet Deardorff notified that internal outcomes could be reached by individuals at different degrees. *External Outcomes*: These have to do with how individuals implement in practice the above attitudes, knowledge and skills, including internal outcomes.

3.2.3. Professional skills

Professional or soft skills (Shuman, 2005), in the context of this research refer to subject-specific knowledge and skills achieved by international students abroad. These skills therefore differ in respect to the students' fields or area of specialization. For instance, some engineering scholars (see e.g., Connelly and Middleton, 1996; Passow, 2007; Shuman et al, 2005) relate the professional skills of students in engineering fields to; the ability to communicate, the ability to efficiently work as part of a team, competence in project management, possession of leadership traits, and others (Gilbuena et al, 2015).

3.2.4. Social values

Schwartz, defined the term *value* to denote the following; i) beliefs, ii) desired goals, iii) specific actions and situations, iv) standards or criteria, v) priorities, and vi) guides for actions (Schwartz, 1992). According to him the six meanings are found in all value types, but in accordance with their objective and motive. Social values are visible in the beliefs and practices of every society (Idang, 2015), and represent an essential part of every society's culture (Puja, 2015). Most social values are connected with religion (Idang, 2015), and tradition (Schwartz, 1992). For Hungerford (1994), social values include having a shared human empathy, feelings and status. Thus, social values in the context of this study on 'Finnish Fulbright returnees' utilization of professional skills and intercultural

competences, in promoting development in their fields of specialization in Finland', refer to beliefs and standard actions which Finnish students came across while attending their Fulbright term in the U.S. This is particularly related to the social values exposed by the Americans, and others' (foreign friends in U.S.).

Summary

In chapter three, I have identified the Capability Approach as Framework for this study on the Finnish Fulbright returnees' utilization and transfer of professional and intercultural competences to promote development in fields of specialization in Finland. Given that the framework was developed in the field of economics, this author has tried to apply the CA of Sen (1985) in the context of this research. First, she has defined main terms that compose the CA as in the original approach. Second, she has assimilated those terms to conform to the perspective of this research. However, a proper alignment of these terms will be discussed in the last chapter of this study; Chapter six to illustrate the match between the findings and the framework in details.

Before discussing the Findings, it is appropriate to discuss the methods by which the research was carried out. Thus, the next chapter four is a clear detail on the strategy and procedures implemented to collect data, the participants involved in the data collection phase, and the approach of analyzing data.

4. Research Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodological considerations and research design of the study. It presents in detail, the technique and method used in collecting and analyzing data for the research. In addition, the strategy used in responding to the research questions is provided, and the sampling method explained. The ethical considerations are well spelt in this chapter, concluding with the presentation of limitations to the chosen technique.

4.1. Methodological choice

Building on the social constructivism perspective, this study employs a qualitative approach. Constructivist researchers assert that when people interact with the world, they build meanings from their interpretations. Moreover, the interpretations and meanings are derived from the views provided by participants through open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009).

Although the quantitative or mix methods approach could be applied in researching the problem of this study, the researcher considered the advantages the qualitative research methods have over other methods especially in the context of this study. The Qualitative approach gives more in depth knowledge of a particular study than the quantitative method. Hence, the method is more helpful to understand the peculiarities of Fulbright program in Finland. Furthermore the principal motive for conducting a qualitative research is to understand the problem of this study from the view point of participants, given that the qualitative research method involves the process of obtaining data in a natural environment where the researcher act as the main instrument of data collection, with a direct contact with participants (Creswell, 2009), unlike the quantitative research approach where insentient tools are used.

Moreover, the qualitative method eases the simplification and management of data, while maintaining its context (Atieno, 2009). While the quantitative research method deals with measurements, qualitative researchers claim that the focus in a qualitative study design is about determining the perceptions and experiences of participants about a given study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) believe that qualitative approach gives the researcher the chance to understand a greater range of realities about the study. In addition, qualitative research is centered at the processes that occur at a given situation and also on the end results of such processes.

This study is an in-depth enquiry about the outcome of an international education program (Fulbright), in a diversified environment (Finland) and the research is constructed in the

interpretations of the views and perspectives of respondents. The purpose of the research is to elucidate and add information to the prosperous image of Fulbright in Finland, by interviewing eligible actors who are Finnish Fulbright returnees. Interviews could be done in different ways, to generate vital and adequate data (Creswell, 2007). These include structured, semi-structured and open ended methods. However, this study follows a semi-structured interview approach in collecting primary data and in guaranteeing an ample understanding of the research questions, while taking into consideration that Taylor & Bogdan (1984) attest the potential of semi structured in depth interviews in enabling researchers to better understand participants' perspectives of their experiences or situations through direct encounter. The study as well finds interest in balancing the information obtained in the literature review with the results of interviews.

4.2. Research design

This research has interest in an in-depth study, centered on investigating the after graduation impact of an international student program (Fulbright program) in promoting development in graduates' fields of specialization in their home countries. This study chooses Fulbright Finland program as a case. Thus, Finnish Fulbright returnees to Finland between the years 2005 to 2015 are the selected group of participants for this research.

The research design applied in carrying out this research is a case study approach. The case study is defined by Cohen & Manion (1995) as the typical observation of the features of a unit (for e.g., a child, a class, a school or a community), with intension to provide deep understanding and analysis of the various happenings and constituents of such unit. A case study thus is a careful observation of the behavior of a distinct group of people in a specific setting.

According to Yin (2003, p. 13), a case study involve *an empirical inquiry that*

- i) *investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when*
- ii) *the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"*

Deriving from this definition, the case study approach allows the reasearcher to examine factors that are relevantly important to their research. Case study usually choose a small population and area as the subject of research.

Participants

This study adopts the Cluster sampling technique in selecting participants. While the number of Finnish Fulbright graduates during the terms of 2007 to 2012 exceeds the intended number (20) of interviewees for this study, the entire population of graduates was broken down into clusters according to their different fields of specialization. Twenty participants were then selected randomly from within each of the groups or clusters. The chosen informants were first contacted with an invitation letter to participate in the study as well as were given the outline of the interview to review before the interview proper. The essence was to familiarize respondents with the questions beforehand and inspire significant replies, which would successfully generate richer data.

4.3. Data Collection

The aim of this study is to find out from informants how they use their professional and intercultural skills acquired in the United States during their Fulbright term, to contribute to the development of their field of specialization in Finland. Deriving from this, interview questions were focused on the practical process of competence utilization at work.

Therefore, this study uses the qualitative strategy to collect and analyze data. The study employs semi structured interviews as an instrument for collecting data, while the results are analyzed using thematic analysis method. The initial anticipation of this researcher was to conduct face to face interviews at the work settings of respondents. Yet, because of time constraint Skype interviews were preferred. Primary data was collected during the months of August and September 2018. This includes five interviews, which didn't take longer than 45 minutes per informant (see interview outline in Appendix). Permission was sought from participants to audio record the interview, and those that agreed got their voices recorded using iFree Skype Recorder software.

Employing the focused style or semi-structure interviews in this study allow this researcher to use both a structured approach as well as a more conversational style, in order to answer the research questions (Minichiello et al, 1995). Therefore, questions asked to participants were based around the guiding questions in the interview outline that consisted of eleven questions developed by the researcher, and were further improved with the aid of her academic supervisor and the Fulbright Finland Foundation team.(see Figure...). Interviews were conducted in a more open manner that placed the participants at ease. This procedure allures respondents to add necessary information relating to the questions with affinity. Some of the participants were against their voice being recorded and as such notes were written instead. Although the voices of respondents who had agreed to be recorded were

audio recorded during the interview, the interviewer considered the necessity to write down notes of her experiences, and perceptions about the participants in this process. Such main ideas discussed during the interview were being jotted down and served as a reminder during analysis.

4.4. Data Analysis

In analyzing data, this study uses Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA process mainly involve the identification of themes in collected data such as interviews. This study applies the TA approach in order to present a detail illustration, and interpretation of data (Boyatzis, 1998). Another reason for considering this method of data analysis has to do with the clear framework it adopts, and provides a '*systematic element to data analysis*' (Alhojailan, 2012, p. 40). The approach gives the researcher the opportunity to accurately identify the existing link between ideas and balance them with secondary data (Ibid). Furthermore, Marks and Yardley (2004) attest that TA offers the chance to better comprehend the strength of any problem in a wide context. Six steps are involved in the Thematic Analysis approach (Clarke, 2006). These include;

- i) familiarization,
- ii) generating initial codes,
- iii) searching for themes,
- iv) reviewing themes,
- v) defining and naming themes,
- vi) Producing the report.

Firstly, recorded data obtained from interviews underwent the process of verbatim transcription, after which the transcripts were read over and over again, to get familiar with themes arising from response of informants. In addition, the audio records were often played again and again to compare with transcripts for correctness. The next phase of analysis was deriving initial codes from transcripts, by organizing data into significant groups. This process of data reduction actually simplified and organized data into more easily manageable components, using first and second level coding approaches (Punch, 1998). First level coding involved examining small, discrete parts of text and identifying concepts contained in the responses. While analyzing data, each sentence or group of sentences of each interview transcript are examined and labeled with descriptive names. The codes derived from first level coding include; respondents' fields of specialization, professional

skills, cultural skills, and social skills. Factors favoring the process of skills transfer to Finland, Factors hindering skills transfer to Finland, and Contribution of skills acquired during Fulbright term in the U.S. to returnees' field of specialization in Finland.

Moreover, qualitative data analysis involves the process of classifying items and their features (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), data was simplified through the use of second-level coding. The process involves examining the first-level descriptive codes and clustering similarly coded units together into categories. These categories were given a second-level conceptual label. The phase of conclusion drawing and verification will seek to note themes emerging from the analysis of each interview transcript and seek to note similarities and differences emerging from a comparison across cases. This phase also sought to offer propositions about emerging themes. Next, the results of analysis are presented. Even though qualitative researchers argue that approaches of data collection and analysis are related in qualitative methods, nevertheless the way in which results are presented is varied. The narrative text method which has been widely used by researchers in presenting results in qualitative studies, is employed in the articulation of findings for this research.

4.5. Validity and Reliability

Validity determines the “*accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings*” (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982, p. 32), by verifying if the researcher has sincerely measured the intended data to be measured, using the appropriate instrument (Joppe, 2000). Meanwhile Joppe (2000, p. 1) says reliability is: “*the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable*”. From the above definitions, validity and reliability are therefore connected with the concept of probity and correctness of research findings, and the suitability of the adopted research method and instrument in answering the research question.

This research tackles the issues of validity and reliability by adopting a clearly defined and well planned analytical framework, in order to retain a focus on relevant data and improve its validity. Furthermore, various sources of data including pile of literature, and interview are highly reliable sources of data for this study. Likewise the researcher did everything possible to ensure that interpretations of results portray the true facts in the responses of participants. The participants as well were allowed the chance to review their responses and

ensure that their views were well captured by the interviewer. Moreover, the researcher identified a peer to read through the work and provide feedback. Hence, an individual with interest in higher education studies, and of course in this chosen topic was found suitable for this purpose. The reason for this review was necessarily to ensure that the content meets reliability. Moreover, the research method used in this study is with clear goals and objectives and indicators, which contribute to the reliability of the study.

4.6. Research ethics

In conducting a qualitative research the researcher is being fed with some sensitive information which has to be carefully handled. In this study, the researcher took the duty to maintain secrecy and anonymity when presenting findings from interviews. Before and during the interviews session, this researcher applied the following to safeguard the rights of respondents: a) A written invitation to participate as interviewee in the study was sent to selected informants, with a clear description of the aims and objectives of the research, and details on the intended use of information. Those objectives were repeated verbally to respondents at the start of the interviews. b) respondents were informed on the strategy of data collection, including the means and device used in recording their voice, not leaving out the time estimate for the interviews. c) as agreed by every informants, their personal information is made anonymous when presenting findings of the study.

4.7. Limitations

The choice of qualitative method for this thesis is because the results of the study are derived from analyzing personal experiences of informants. The findings are as such solely dependent on the information provided by the respondents. It is possible that in such situation where people have to remember past events, relating to their experience while studying in the United States after a couple of years, can probably lead to forgetfulness, that is, not everything would be recalled. For this reason, the researcher had to send a soft copy of the interview outline to respondents some time before the proper interview took place. This strategy provided the participants enough time to reflect on their past experiences beforehand, and it as well made the interview process a smooth activity. Moreover, interviews were conducted with a total number of eight persons to generate diverse views about the topic.

The selection of informants was done in a manner that avoids bias; the researcher had only come in contact with respondents during the interview. The process of inviting potential

respondents for this thesis and presenting interview questions to them before hand was done by the Fulbright Finland Foundation staff. Nevertheless sampling of the population was done by the researcher in collaboration with a staff of Fulbright Finland Foundation. The responses of informants were well recorded and transcribed in order to meet reliability. Yet notes were written down in one case where the informant didn't prefer his voice to be recorded. In this situation, the interview process was a little bit slower as the researcher tried not to be bias at all cost, by writing down every information the respondent provided word to word.

More also, a limitation to this study is that the researcher chose thematic approach in analyzing findings. In this way, the interpretations are presented in respect of the themes developed from the interviews. For this reason, only few responses are presented quoting the words of informants. Furthermore, the informants in this research are specialized in different types of field, and this support the abundance of data related to the topic of this study. Conclusively, this being a qualitative research, do not allow for the results to be generalized or attributed to other returnees' who are not in the population sphere of this study.

Summary

In this chapter, the methodology applied to generate data has been explained. The researcher had chosen a qualitative approach in which semi-structured interviews were being conducted with eight respondents. The interviews were recorded and notes were written down, and were further transcribe and analyzed. The researcher has given the details on the procedure of data analysis and identified the thematic approach as the method used in analyzing the responses. I have also explained the ethics and validity and reliability of this study, and have outlined some limitations to the study.

The next chapter five, is the analysis of findings derived from semi-structured interviews with eight informants. The findings are being presenting according to the main and semi codes/themes that were identified during coding

5. Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study. Information provided by informants during the interviews is analyzed using the Thematic Analysis approach. Hence, the responses fall under each theme that was derived from coding the interviews. More also, some themes were pre - defined already in the interview outline. For instance, first category codes like “*skills acquired in the U.S.*”, “*professional skills*”, and, “*cultural and social competences*”. While presenting the results from interviews, some sentences are quoted by the words of respondents yet, anonymity is respected. In this manner the informants are represented by “Respondents 1,2,3...” (RP1,2,3...)

Below, is the table consisting of themes developed from interview responses. They are categorized under each first heading.

Skills acquired in the U.S.	Professional skills	Cultural and social competences
Processes of utilizing skills in fields of specialization in Finland	<i>Academic domain</i>	<i>Industry domain</i>
	Lecture delivery Research and publication	Mentoring and training interns
		Collaboration with companies
		Transfer of skills to work colleagues
		Engagement in sustainable projects

Figure 5; Structure of Findings

5.1. Skills acquired during Fulbright Term in U.S.

The respondents in this study expressed that they found the Fulbright program very beneficial in several aspects of their lives, mainly in increasing their skills and competences. On another note, informants acknowledged the program to be a transformative force. The graduates highly valued the Fulbright grants, and institutions they studied in the U.S. to have met their study needs.

This respondent who had studied in the Fulbright program for Masters and PhD recounts; “ *I am quite a different person since I lived in the U.S. for the Fulbright program, and for about seven years. I have grown professionally, socially...*”(RP 5). This illustrates the transformative potential of the Fulbright program on students. Students in this light are seen as *inputs* that undergo training(*transformation*) through the Fulbright program which offers them adequate *resources* and facilities in reputable universities in the United States. Hence, this conform with the theory of the study as *comodities* or *resources* are what facilitates the achievement of *capabilities* (Sen, 1985). Additionally, the availability of study facilities in the U.S. universities probably contributed to the Finnish Fulbright students academic success, since one of the reasons international students consider studying in top universities is to benefit from good university facilities (Chen, 2007), adequate supervision, and available campus support (Norton, 2008).

In chapter 3, I have attempted to conceptualize the Capability Approach in the context of the Fulbright program, whereby *commodities* which signify available resources that enable the production of capabilities are seen to fall inline with “reasons relating to quality of universities, study programs and tuition” (see chapter 2.2.1.b)) in the literature review. This means commodities are the material and non material supplies provided to students during their Fulbright studies. For instance, quality universities, technological, and financial supplies. The Fulbright Student Program provide a given amount of grants to students and researchers for the duration of their term abroad, and students are enrolled in U.S. universities specialized in their various fields of study. Hence, the Fulbright students hold the material and non material resources that can guarantee their achievement of capabilities.

Skills and competences (otherwise referred as *capabilities* in the context of CA) acquired by the Finnish Fulbright returnees during their terms in the U.S. are grouped into the following categories; professional, cultural, and social competences.

5.1.1. Professional skills

Majority of informants reportedly specialized in Science, Technology, and Engineering fields. Most of them, after completing their Master’s continued with PhD studies during their Fulbright term in the United States. Professional skills achieved during the Fulbright studies are aligned with students’ fields of specialization. For instance, a graduate in the field of design process reported to have gained skills in understanding design processes in general, while another in the field of power systems mentioned to have achieved a great

experience in power, energy and solar systems. Another being a researcher acquired a better understanding of how research and publications are done, and many more. The professional skills achieved by the Finnish Fulbrighters in the United States therefore differ in respect to their fields of specialization. This convey the definition of professional skills in Chapter 3 (Shuman et al, 2005; Gilbuena et al, 2015).

Although some of the respondents had studied abroad in other countries before participating in the Fulbright program in the United States, to a greater extent the students attribute their professional skills possession to their studies in the Fulbright proram.

“Now I have so much professional experience because of Fulbright program. Studying in the U.S. for the Fulbright program was not my first experience abroad. I had lived and studied in other parts of the world within Europe, and Africa. However the Fulbright is a unique program that I so much enjoyed. ...And the knowledge and skills I got during my Fulbright term in the U.S. are very aligned to my field of study... ”.(RP 1)

Moreover, students were able to improve on their practical skills during the Fulbright term in the United States. Thus, their choice to participate in such a prestigious international study program was seen to have paid off.

“I learned to become more practically oriented in my field through my studies in the Fulbright program. I only studied for Bachelor’s degree in Finland, after which I started considering doing a Masters program in the United States. I had in mind a number of study programs I could apply to, but the Fulbright program happened to be my final choice. This is a popular and rich program, and I couldn’t afford to miss the opportunity. I am now a professional in my field because of the skills I got during my studies in the U.S.(RP 3).

“Studying for Masters and PhD in the U.S. was a cool idea. My Fulbright experience enriched my understanding of content and practicalities in my field. My research skills were being improved and I gained knowledge on publishing” (RP4)

Some informants provided responses that could imply the professors they met during the Fulbright program were highly qualified and are experts in their subject areas.

“Professors and experts in my field imparted me with professional skills needed in my profession. I was opportune to have met such wonderful professors and researchers during the Fulbright program in the U.S. ” (RP6)

Moreover, the respondents disclosed that the Fulbright program provided them the opportunity to expand their entrepreneurial mindset, and they reveal being confident to try new things. Generally, it was discovered that the graduates are able to effectively utilize their professional skills at work.

"Through the Fulbright program, I have grown and developed in the direction of my professional dreams. I had stop being fearful and learned to think outside of the box. I am now an innovative person and I am working hard to expand my success." (RP 7)

"Some of the important skills I gained during the Fulbright in the U.S. which have been of immense help to my work are; an innovative spirit, determination, ability to take risk, and leadership skills"(RP8)

In addition, the Fulbright program was viewed by respondents to have increased their employment opportunities upon graduation.

"After the Fulbright program, I got a smooth transition to employment in the United States. The professional skills I acquired during my studies perfectly suit my present job" (RP5)

5.1.2. Intercultural and Social Competences

Studying in the United States for the Fulbright term gave the Finnish students the chance to learn many new languages including English. In connection with the *attitudes* variable of Deardorff's model of intercultural competence seen above in Chapter 3, informants took the strategy to become open to knowledge and information about the American culture. English was the language used in communication, yet the students showed some level of value for other cultures when interacting with the people. First timers to study abroad recalled how interesting and fascinating the experience was as they interact with people from various parts of the world, even though at the beginning it was "difficult to fit in".

"When I got in the U.S. for Fulbright studies, things were not the same as compared to Finland. A lot of things were strange to me. However, I had the belief that I could learn and adapt to the system. So I made new friends from other nationalities. It was interesting to learn their languages and lifestyles. With time, I got adapted to the American culture and everything moved on successfully"(RP 8)

The informants talked about the challenges and surprises they had encountered during the Fulbright study in the United States. Challenges mentioned basically involve difficulty to adjust to the U.S culture. Example of surprises mentioned by some respondents is the fact

Americans are being stereotype. However, some other respondents who had studied out of Finland before their Fulbright in the U.S. could naturally and normally fit in to the American culture.

"For me, it was not much a challenge, adjusting to the American culture. I guess because I had lived in other countries before. Living in the U.S. did not change my Finnish values, but I had respect for the values of the Americans..."(RP 1)

However, with the existence of some differences between the Finnish and the American cultures, the returnees who lived in the United States for some years got adapted to the American lifestyle to the extent they found some aspects of Finnish culture challenging to readapt. Respondent 1 in the interview recounts;

"I felt very comfortable living in the U.S. and had trouble coming to Finland because there are few foreigners and the Finnish people are not too open..."(RP1)

Although the Finnish Fulbrighters came across people whose values and lifestyle are not very aligned with theirs, they had lived in harmony as a community disregarding of the multicultural differences. One could see here evident of the *Knowledge* variable in the model of intercultural competence(Deardorff, 2006). Through their interaction with foreigners in the U.S. the informants were able to gain culture-specific knowledge, deep cultural knowledge including understanding other world views, and sociolinguistic awareness of other cultures. Social gatherings organized by the Fulbright program played a great role in upgrading the student's level of social interaction.

"I became very curious to know how things are done in the United States. I therefore took the challenge and started friendships with American locals in my class. We usually socialize and go out during free times. This enabled me to get acquainted to the environment..."(RP2)

"There are activities that the Fulbright program organized for us students. I found them very interesting. Also, the orientation of new students provide the chance to meet new friends. We became a community. I came in contact with some personalities through such Fulbright activities in the U.S. We are still professionally and socially connected even as I returned to Finland..."(RP3)

Moreover, social and cultural interactions during the Fulbright term in U.S, helped Finnish students to conquer some of their fears and challenges. Most respondents revealed they became open minded, courageous to approach people of higher personality, had confidence in trying new things, and meeting new people.

“Interacting with American citizens brought some changes to my life; I had tend to behave similar to my American friends...but not negatively(laugh).I became confident and more courageous to talk to people even thoes in higher positions. The American way of communication is direct as compared to the Finnish style, I learned to approach people directly”.(RP 4)

”Participating in the Fulbright program opened up my mind to new ideas. The experience provided me opportunity to think positively about change and better results in several aspects of my life. When I lived in the United States, my way of thinking and how I viewed the world was completely different from when I was in Finland. (RP6) . Thus this relates to Deardorff’s *Skills* variable which is about the processing of knowledge. It can only be possible that observing, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating to new ideas and happenings in the U.S. were the actions causing students to see themselves as “citizens of the world”. In the same light, *Internal Outcomes* variable of Deardorff’s model of intercultural competence (2006) which are the results of acquired attitudes, knowledge and skills in an individual are made visibly here. This is because an indicator of this outcome is the ability of a person to view things from the perspectives of others, and also to effectively respond to them in accordance to the desires of other people.

Furthermore, with their experiences in the United States, Finnish students developed better tactics in searching for work after studies.

“My approach to finding work is more different than what it was before I went to the U.S. I know exactly what to do; how to network” (RP2.). From their views, it was determined that their External Outcomes (see Deardorff’s model of intercultural competences in Chap 3)were manifested in this aspect. External outcomes represent how individuals implement in practice the *attitudes, knowledge, and skills*, including *internal outcomes*(Deardorff, 2006).

As such, a good number of returnees had an effective transition to their careers after their Fulbright program. With the skills and knowledge aquired in the Fulbright program the students could boost their resumes with outstanding profiles.

“I am connected with several people in the world, when they see my profile, and at confrences when we meet and discuss... I talk of my experience and mention the Fulbright program..., might be this is one reason people find interest in connecting with me”(RP3)

In summation to the whole of section 5.1, the researcher has analyzed the findings from interviews in the context of two concepts of the CA which are *commodities* and *capabilities*. It can be seen from the views of informants that the commodities provided by the Fulbright program enabled them achieve their capabilities in their various areas of specialization. However, *conversion factors* involving academic, research, and social activities are processes that facilitated the achievement of those capabilities. These capabilities were highly valued by the Finnish Fulbright graduates whom most of them are employed in their home country. How the returnees transfer their capabilities to *functionings*, to some extent becomes a matter of *choice or freedom*. Choice and freedom in that, the process of transferring knowledge / skills require willingness and zeal.

5.2. Processes of utilizing skills in fields of specialization in Finland

This section discusses *Functionings* of Finnish Fulbright returnees. So, functionings in this context refers to the further utilization of acquired knowledge, skills and competences in Finland. As functionings would only happen in the field of work, the most utilization and transfer of skills to Finland for sure takes place in the fields of work of returnees. Informants who returned to Finland after the Fulbright program in the U.S. reported to either be employed or self employed. As already seen in the definition of functionings in Chapter 3 above, employment on itself is not a functioning implying that the duties and work performed by the returnees when employed are what represents functionings. The Finnish Fulbright returnees identified a number of mechanisms in which they transfer and utilize professional and cultural skills to their home country, in respect to their disciplines and area of expertise. These fall into the following domains :

5.2.1. Skills in the academic domain

Teaching and research are the common activities in this domain. Fulbright returnees to Finland who are professors/lecturers and researchers mentioned that they have been impacting the lives of students through lecture delivery and supervision of research and theses. Here is an example of such response;

“I have supervised several student projects, some of my students are taking lead in one of the universities”(RP3)

Another way in which the returnees applied their skills in the academic sphere is by writing opinion pieces and publications. Other returnees declared they had the ability to utilize skills and expertise during conferences and seminars organized in the academic milieu.

Furthermore, academic returnees also transfer their skills to their fellow colleagues, for instance during workshops, and meetings. An informant who had studied design process in the United States during his Fulbright term said he is a lecturer in that field, and also transfers his new knowledge and skills acquired in the U.S. to his colleagues. During the teaching process the returnees transfer ideas on better teaching methodology and content for instance, on design processes deriving from what was learned abroad.

Therefore, it can be observed that Finnish Fulbright returnees' '*functioning*' is proportionate to the process of utilizing, and transferring skills through teaching students. In the process of teaching, new techniques and thoughts are developed and transferred to students and fellow staff.

Challenges of skills application and transfer in the academic domain

In his definition of functionings in 1985 Sen believed that functionings could either be what is done or accomplished, or what is likely to be attained. While the utilization and transfer of skills in the academic domain was attainable, not every professional skill could be feasibly applied. Power difference is one factor that prevented returnees from enforcing new ideas and thoughts they got from studies in the Fulbright program. The returnees talked of their inability to make some changes or alterations to already existent policies in their area of expertise. This is on account of their lack of positive *freedoms*. *Positive freedoms* stand for the ability to acquire things that are highly valued (Robeyns, 2017). That notwithstanding, in some cases they could cooperate with the authorities and management at their faculty and such positive ideas were applied to impart necessary solutions.

“As a lecturer, sometimes I have new ideas of how programs could be better organized to meet the needs of both the students and lecturers, but I cannot implement the change by myself. First of all I am not in a position to do that. But I will not just stop to share my ideas. My academic colleagues are very open to new ideas from everyone, so I have been collaborating with the program manager and together we could find a perfect solution.”

Along these lines, it becomes impossible to identify the practical processes by which returnees in the academic domain transfer professional skills to promote development in their fields of work. There appear to be normalcy in the utilization and transfer of skills in the classroom atmosphere and not beyond.

5.2.2. Skills transfer in the industry domain

In this domain majority of respondents claimed their current jobs are aimed at benefiting the industry and society, while expounding the processes in which they utilize professional skills to advance their various fields of specialization. Activities mentioned are performed at the work places and beyond. Informants indicated that the skills acquired in the U.S. during their Fulbright term were a great match to the requirements of their job. Activities performed include the following;

Mentoring and training interns

Most informants said they had often trained a great number of interns in their work place. Interns are usually university students, and young professionals seeking for practical knowledge and skills. The informants explained to have provided students of universities studying to achieve degrees and certificates the chance to gain an understanding of, and experience the practical application of academic knowledge. Returnees indicated their activities in this aspect involve training, observing and supervising the work activities of the interns, thus preparing them to better identify their interests and potential for a career in the field. The informants argued that the process of supervising and supporting interns provide students with practical skills which are most beneficial to them in their field of studies.

“Usually, I perform my duty to develop skills of students that are learned in the classroom, by transferring to them the practical knowledge I gained during my Fulbright studies. I believe that this process exposes the interns to better practical experiences”.

“I used my professional skills to assist the interns in determining their career goals, and to transfer knowledge in the field of engineering to new professionals. For young professionals in the field, the aim of the training is to widen their skills and mindset about common problems”.

“I have acted as a supervisor to several interns, because my institution considers me a knowledgeable and skillful expert, who has the capabilities to train the interns. The interns ask me practical questions and I would not say that I have perfect answers all the time. But I always find a way to resolve those challenges in one way or the other”.

“I have come across a number of people who want a placement where I work because they believe I can teach them some things practically at work”

Tutoring and mentoring university students

Another way by which returnees transfer professional skills in Finland is by privately tutoring students, who approach them for assistance when faced with challenging practicalities in the field.

“I have been an individual tutor and offer special lessons to some students. Working one-on-one with the student facilitates the process of skill transfer”.

According to the interviewees' response, the students end up with the following competences; ability to identify their professional interest and develop their skills in accordance with the requirements of their professional field, and the ability to meet resources and approaches which can promote their academic progress, and smoothen the transition to employment. Respondents also mentioned that they have organized seminars mainly for training professionals and for providing relevant information and lectures on pressing topics in their field.

Collaborating with other companies

It was noticed that some returnees partner with companies that are still growing in providing professional support to the team where necessary. According to some respondents, they transfer their professional skills to promote growth in their field through outsourcing. Informants mentioned that their companies get involve in outsourcing skills and knowledge to other field related companies who contact them for technical assistance.

“The company selects staff who are competent and skillful to do the work. We do research and analysis as well as work in collaboration with staff of other firms in finding solutions to complex problems. This is a learning process for both companies but it is highly beneficial to the other company because we bring in advanced experience and knowledge that will increase productivity and boost development to the field”.

It can therefore be seen in this context that collaboration between companies promote skills and knowledge transfer and also paves a way for learning. This is because both parties come up with different viewpoints and develop strategies on resolving issues at hand. Yet, as already mentioned in the above quote by an informant, there is no argument that the greater beneficiary becomes the later company considering that it sought for a more qualified and skillful team better than its own.

Transfer of skills to colleagues

This domain is connected with skills transfer on the job. It was also mentioned by the Fulbright returnees that they have been sharing with their work colleagues new ideas and skills gained during their studies in the U.S. Some indicated that they have got recognition for their extra talent and skills performed and shared at work.

Engagement in sustainable projects

Informants mentioned that they had executed projects that are long lasting and bring about development in the field. Such technical projects are those in the fields of engineering. As reported by respondents, power and solar system projects are to a greater extent similar in the United States and in Finland. For this reason, skills acquired during the Fulbright term in the United States were implemented in the projects in Finland with no or less challenges.

“Since I returned to Finland, I have been employed for about three years now. For these few years my company had engaged in a number of projects on sustainable energy.”

Transfer of skills in the socio-cultural milieu

In the aspect of social and cultural skills transfer, the mentioned cases were at the job, in social gatherings, in the Fulbright alumni Association and orientation of incoming U.S. Fulbrighters to Finland. More also, the ability to interact with foreign friends in Finland.

Communication is a vital channel in the process of skill utilization and transfer. Therefore, it is most important that the parties involved be able to exchange information effectively. In this study, returnees' communication competencies take into account their ability to understand and respect other cultures and languages and communicate freely with foreigners. Most of the informants made known the fact the language and inter-cultural competences gained in the United States during the Fulbright studies aided in their daily interactions with foreign work colleagues and friends in Finland. Skills transfer or utilization in multicultural atmospheres during work, or during social interaction necessitates such intercultural competences because they are relevant for skill transfer. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the returnees could easily channel skills to a multicultural community, due to their ability to interpret and analyze knowledge and skills needed to be transmitted.

Conclusion to processes of skills utilization and transfer to fields of specialization in Finland

According to the returnees the cultural attitudes, skills and knowledge which they possess have enabled them work and interact effectively with foreigners in Finland. Respondents such as lecturers who teach foreign students; and others who are involve in consultancy and work with forign clients out of Finland greatly valued the intercultural competences gained from the Fulbright program. In line with the response of an informant who is a lecturer, it is a difficult process to identify the contribution they could make to promote development in their field of specialization, especially if they do not work as policy makers. Nevertheless, the lecturers as well utilise skills and expertise in carrying out research activities in the university. At most times, returnees are appreciated for their research activities. In addition, the fact that most returnees in the academic milieu are able to make use of intercultural competences, including communication and fluency in English during lectures is beneficial.

Furthermore, as the returnees considered their professional skills very beneficial to their fields of specialization, there is therefore enough opportunity for the Fulbright returnees to employ their *capabilities* directly at work in the context of Finland. This could explain why a majority of returnees in the industrial sectors agreed to have had a smooth transition from studies to employment.

Concluding from the interview results, it also seems that the Fulbright returnees enjoyed common values with work colleaugues, but it was quiet challenging to readapt to the values of Finland immediately after they returned from the U.S. Most informants made it known that they had become acustomed to the norms and values of the U.S. especially when they had lived there for a number of years. Nevertheless, they have readaptated to their culture as time went on. Moreover, most returnees believe the American culture and lifestyle have been beneficial to them in Finland; for instance the Fulbright returnees recount that they were able use the American tactics in searching for jobs in Finland, which was a success. Others admitted that the cultural attitudes of being open and confident to approach people of higher personality enabled them create networks with their managers and leaders as a measure to build chances for future collaboration and opportunities for promoting solution and positive changes in their field.

More also, as beeing analyzed from interviews in the transfer of skills in the socio cultural milieur, the Fulbright returnees to Finland interact freely with internationals living in Finland. They have further recommended their fellow Finnish citizens to create friendships and associate with foreigners in Finland, in order to become more international and multicultural.

5.3. Discussions

The analyses of the findings for this study on the professional and intercultural capabilities of Finnish Fulbright returnees, in the development of their fields of specialization in Finland are presented in chapter 5. The results demonstrate the ability of international graduates to apply professional and intercultural skills acquired abroad in the development of their fields of specialization, through their work. This findings are to some extent contrasting to available literature on the impact of internationalization, given that most of such studies are limited to the contribution of international studies to employability and monetary values. But this study have proven that employment is not the end to the impact of internationalization, but rather, the contributions towards development of society at large or different areas like fields of specialization.

I will illustrate here, how the findings meet the following aims of the research questions;

- i. *The relevance of professional skills, intercultural competences and values acquired in the U.S. to the works of the returnees in Finland.*

It seem that in line with literature on the factors that attract international students to study abroad, (like universities, quality and availability of adequate resources), the Finnish Fulbright graduates attest the worth of such facilities in meeting their study needs. Thus, their ability to achieve knowledge and skills in their area of study and even interculturallly. The returnees as well affirm that those skills facilitated their employability. Besides, they were able to utilize the skills practically in their works. General professional skills other than field related were developed during the Fulbright studies in the United States. Examples of those mentioned by the respondents are; an innovative spirit, determination, ability to take risk, and leadership skills. Graduates involved themselves in social and cultural activities during their studies, that enabled them learn some new languages and improved on their English language skills. Accordingly, the Fulbright program improved the language skills of the graduates as already seen in literature in chapter two that international studies contribute to the acquisition of new language skills. Also, building on the intercultural competences model of Deardorff, it seem that Fulbright returnees indulge themselves in socio-cultural activities, and with foreign friends while in the United States, and were able to achieve variables of intercultural competences which Deardorff refer to as; attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes(Deardorff, 2006; 2009).

ii. *The transformative potential of Fulbright Program in fostering development in the field of specialization of Fulbright returnees, in Finland.*

Although the Finnish Fulbright returnees are employed in Finland, employment alone is not the outcome of their international studies. As such the study sought to examine the functionings of the returnees, which can be determined by the things they do and what they are. Alkire (2015) termed this as *valuable functionings*. The results of this study show that functionings were in the area of academics and industry. Returnees were lecturers and researchers in the academic domain, and they utilize skills in lecturing, researching, publication and others, in fostering development in the academic sphere. It could be challenging to identify the activities put in to bring about development in this domain, as seen in the challenges above. This is necessarily because the returnees who were respondents to this study, and working in the universities, do not hold power positions to enact practical changes in the academic domain. Therefore, their *freedom* to achieve what they value is limited.

In the industry domain returnees exhibit their functionings in several ways including; mentoring and training of interns, and tutoring some university students specialized in their field; transferring of skills and knowledge to other companies (also assisting in solving their practical problems); transferring of skills to work colleagues; and executing sustainable projects related to the field. Here, one can see the practical utilization of professional skills in developing fields of specialization. In that, industry based activities and sustainable projects are a physical representation of benefits of professional skills achieved by the graduates in the Fulbright program.

Summary

Chapter five is a presentation of findings in respect to the themes derived from interviews. The results are analyzed in accordance to the Capability Approach and in respect to the concepts of *commodities or resources; capabilities; and functionings* (Sen1985). Generally, while contextualizing the findings to the concepts of the CA the Fulbright program becomes a force that transmits resources into capabilities and into functionings of graduates. Thus corresponding with the CA's measurement, that is, transformation of inputs into outputs and into outcomes. In addition, the results on intercultural competences of the Finnish Fulbright graduates were analyzed in the direction of Deardorff's pyramid model of intercultural competences. Variables such as attitudes, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes and external

outcomes were applied to understand the intercultural competences of participants. The researcher also connected the results from the interviews to the literature review.

The analyses of findings have been classified into professional skills, social and cultural competences which returnees had acquired during their studies in the Fulbright Program in the United States. Under the professional category, the skills fall into various domains identified to be academic, and industry. In addition, the author has discussed the processes by which the Finnish returnees apply the skills in their field of specialization in Finland. It is seen from above that the utilization of skills and knowledge by the returnees vary according to their field of specialization and the nature of their job. In the academic domain, mostly soft skills are applied. However, in the industry domain practical skills are applied. It is interesting to discover that these skills are also transferred and shared with colleagues at work. While in the socio-cultural milieu the skills are not necessarily transferred at work, but anywhere while interacting with friends and other people in daily life.

In this section of analyzing the findings, the study has provided answers to the two research questions by connecting the literature review, with the interview responses, and the theory. The results in the whole of Chapter 5.1, can be seen to provide answers to question 1. *How corresponding are professional skills and intercultural competences acquired by Finnish Fulbright students during their Fulbright term in the U.S. to their fields of specialization?* Meanwhile, the results presented under the whole of Chapter 5.2. are providing response to research question 2. *How do the returnees transfer those skills and competences to advance growth in their fields of specialization in Finland?*

The next chapter six, is a conclusion and recommendations of this thesis. It is more of a summary of the entire thesis and a conclusion of the results presented in this chapter.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

This research is an investigation on the means by which Finnish Fulbright returnees utilize professional skills and intercultural competences, to promote growth in their fields of specialization in Finland. The study is built on the inspiration that the outcome of international education should not be focused only on employability or financial resources, but rather on the impact by which students can make upon graduation. The study tries to explain that international returnees can contribute to development processes in their field of specialization and their home country at large.

The purpose of the study is to determine the significance of Fulbright program to the Finnish society. It also discovers the practical processes by which the graduates transfer professional skills and intercultural competences to their work. This is done by examining the transmission factors that facilitates the practical utilization of those skills and competences to promote growth in different sectors in Finland. The following research questions are a guide that aided the achievement of the study objectives

- 1. How corresponding are professional skills and intercultural competences acquired by Finnish Fulbright students during their Fulbright term in the U.S. to their fields of specialization?*
- 2. How do the returnees transfer those skills and competences to advance growth in their fields of specialization in Finland?*

The aims of these research questions are explained as follows; research question one gives information on the relevance of professional skills, intercultural competences and values acquired in the U.S. to the works of the returnees in Finland. While research question two is to provide an understanding on the transformative potential of Fulbright Program in fostering development in the field of specialization of Fulbright returnees, in Finland.

The qualitative research method was used in this study, as an approach to provide answers to the above research questions. The author chose semi structured interviews as an instrument for primary data collection. In accordance with the private schedules of participants, the interviews were collected in the months of August and September, 2018. A total of eight interviews were done on Skype, and were being audio recorded using iFree Skype recorder software. The interviews were transcribed and coded using QDA Miner 4 Lite software. The study adopts the Capability Approach of Sen (1985) in analyzing results. A detail on the CA of Sen (1985) is discussed in Chapter three of this study. The theory is also used to describe the manner by which returnees utilize capabilities acquired from their studies abroad in the U.S., and how this goes further to cause progress in their field of specialization in Finland.

Answers for research questions were derived by linking informants' responses, with the literature review, and the Capability Approach. The results illustrate that the Fulbright returnees have utilized their resources (*commodities*) and exerted the professional skills and intercultural competences (*capabilities*) which they gained in the U.S. at the time of their studies, in promoting growth in Finland through their work (*functionings*). The returnees have done this by utilizing and transferring skills through various activities including; in the Academic milieu that encompasses teaching and research where knowledge is being transferred to students, and new perceptions and skills being introduced and imparted. Researchers used their skills in carrying out research, in writing articles and opinion pieces. Also, networks with professors and colleagues in the U.S. contributed to enhancing their research. For the industry domain, professional skills and competences are utilized in performing work related to the field in a number of ways, and also transferred to colleagues, trainees, and to other companies. In the industry domain new skills and ideologies were said to be a greater factor contributing to sustainable development in fields of engineering and power system in Finland.

As the study used the Capability Approach as framework, results are being analyzed in accordance to its concepts of *commodities or resources*; *capabilities*; and *functionings* (Sen1985). As such, it can be said that the Fulbright program is a transformative force that turns commodities (which in the literature review are available resources provided to Fulbright grantees that facilitate their learning process in the United States), through conversion factors (teaching, research, and social activities), which aid the achievement of capabilities (professional and intercultural skills and competences), which they further utilize to achieve their functionings. The Fulbright program is considered one of the

prestigious international study programs worldwide. It is often believed by some people that the reason has to do with most Fulbright graduates holding higher positions within the society. This study has proven that ideology wrong, and recognized that there are more benefits of the Fulbright program to the society than just high power positions and status; the sample of participants in this study is a good example, because there was literary no body with a higher position in the society among the eight respondents. Yet, the responses prove that the returnees have done a lot of work to see to the development of their fields of specialization. According to the findings, the Fulbright returnees' skills are higher valued by their employers, meaning that they possess outstanding skills than most of their colleagues who did not take part in the Fulbright studies abroad. This can be seen for instance, in the response of a participant above in Chapter 5, who explained that his employer often assign him to carry out front duties like in transferring skills to other companies, and in training interns, amongst others. Not only in the industry domain but it can also be recalled that a respondent in the academic domain above boldly attest to have impacted the lives of several of her students, and gave an example of her student taking a lead in a reputable university due to her input. Given that the scope of this study is limited to the views of the returnees, it would be interesting to find out from the employers how they can rate the performances of Fulbright returnees against those of locally trained employees in terms of professional skills utilization at work. Only then would this point be backed up with scientific findings.

Despite that this study is one attempting to determine the after employment impact of Fulbright returnees to their fields of specialization in their home country, further research could be done from this study, by conducting a qualitative study on the perspectives of employers regarding Fulbright returnees' application of skills at their job. This could be a comparative study, finding out what are the differences between locally trained employees and Fulbright trained employees in respect to skills and competences utilization and transfer at work.

Another study deriving from the topic of this research could be done quantitatively, with a large group of participants to find out what powers and positions do Fulbright returnees hold in their work. It could be interesting to elaborate on this, by pin pointing the activities carried out by the returnees in high power positions to know their contributions to their country. For instance, a study could be done on how Fulbright returnees working in the Ministry of Education have impacted higher education policies in Finland.

6.2. Implications of study

The results of this study present that studies abroad contribute to enhancing the skills and knowledge of students. It shows that international education programs like Fulbright provide students an opportunity to develop their skills internationally. Even though most people measure the outcome of education by employability and economic benefits, the benefits of international education are beyond these; it is seen from this research that Fulbright returnees exert their skills and potentials in any situation where need be, sometimes regardless of being employed. Nevertheless, it would be necessary that the Fulbright program work in collaboration with some companies and institutions to arrange for immediate placement (could be temporal) of returnees in their home country. With fresh skills and knowledge, returnees can do a lot to promote development in their fields of study. But when returnees are unemployment and there is no place to practice their skills upon graduation, the knowledge and skills evaporate with time. Creating such temporal placement opportunities could curb brain drain.

Although some students after studying abroad are employed in the host country, it would be better that the Fulbright program creates professional links between graduates working abroad and local companies and institutions. If the graduates and local companies can collaborate and work together on projects there is bound to be some kind of knowledge and skills transfers to the home country. It could be very challenging for graduates who live abroad to transfer knowledge and competences to their country of origin when there is no network between the graduates and local sectors of their field of specialization. However, the graduates on their part are recommended to build connections with such local companies in their area of specialization, and not necessarily depend on another party. This is because, if there is willingness to participate in developing their sector, then every little effort to achieve the will can be relevant.

Furthermore, employers should make available room for graduates to put into practice their skills and knowledge at their work place. They can open doors for internship and restrictively give preference to returnees. This would be a learning process for both parties; on one hand, the staff of the company will be opportune to gain such new skills and knowledge brought in by returnees. With these their work performance would be improved. On the other hand, the returnees would be taught new field changes in their country. This will help them adapt to the environment.

6.2.1. Theoretical implication

It is of importance to examine intercultural aspects of international graduates who return to their home country, and relate them to the context of their country especially when differences exist. The Capability Approach can vitally be applied to demonstrate how graduates can participate in development processes. For the analyses of the findings, the responses of returnees have been the preference. Thus, informants of this study are viewed as the source of information with validation.

This study features the significance in exploring the position of abroad studies in skills and knowledge expansion, and its role in development of fields of specialization. The activities of returnees that promote development are understood from the perspective of the connections between the host and home countries of returnees. The Findings of this study imply that professional skills and intercultural competences acquired from international education, have enhance the practical experiences of returnees and are a contribution to good practices for sustainable development in the fields of specialization in their home countries.

The Findings of this research suggests there are benefits of the Fulbright program in terms of contribution to development of field of specialization of returnees. These benefits results from skill utilization such as, soft skills, language proficiency (English), professional skills, coupled with industry and technical knowledge. Considering the advantages of these internationally acquired skills, knowledge, competences and attributes in providing employment to returnees, there is a reality of the need to adapt to the work culture of their home country. In addition, the returnees must be ready to create connections with people in their respective field of specialty as a measure for future career advancement. Such networks are required with both foreign based and locally based individuals.

6.2.2 Limitation of the study

A major limitation to this research is about the number of participants. The total number of respondents in the interviews happened to be only eight, which is less than the anticipated number. Even though invitations were sent out to a reasonable number of people, time factor was a hindrance to most people participating in the study. However, this problem does not affect the results of the study to a maximum level, because the responses gathered go a long way to cover to scope and aims of the study. Yet, the findings of this study are limited to the scope and might not apply to a wider population such as to other international study

programs, given that the study is focused on the Fulbright program and to Finland in specific. More also, the interpretations of results of interviews are based on the researchers understanding and as such are subjective. Another limitation to this study is with the conceptualization of the Capability Approach to the context of this research. In doing this, the researcher failed to examine some components of the CA such as wellbeing and agency. The reason is that this research itself is not centered at measuring the wellbeing or agency of the Fulbright returnees, but is rather based on the development aspect centered on peoples' capabilities i.e. what they are able to do and what they can be (Robeyns, 2003) of the CA. As such, these components (wellbeing and agency) are seen to be of no relevance to the study because this study is not based on a philosophical approach that focuses on happiness and wellbeing of people. Moreover, Nussbaum (2000) had integrate concepts of *wellbeing and agency* to concepts of *capability* and *functioning*.

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Appendixes

1. Invitation to participate in an Interview

Dear Fulbright Finland Alumnus and Alumna,

My name is Nsame Catherine Dzekem. I am a student of the Erasmus Mundus Master's program in Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MaRIHE). Last year in the months of June, July and August 2017 I interned in the Fulbright Finland Foundation, where I conducted a qualitative study on the impact of Fulbright to the professional and personal lives of students. I am presently conducting research about "professional and intercultural capabilities of Finnish Fulbright returnees in the development of their fields of specialization in Finland". In respect to this, I am inviting you to participate as an interviewee for this research. The results of this study will be published in the website of the Fulbright Finland Foundation. Furthermore, if you grant the request to take part in this research, the interview will be done at a time suitable for you. This will be a Skype interview, comprised of semi structured questions which are intended to take about 45minutes. I will also like to record the interview for transcription purpose. However, if you would not like your voice to be recorded, I will rather write notes.

Meanwhile if you accept to participate in the interview, you therefore agree to comply with the following terms;

- Participation as an interviewee to this research is voluntary and there is no direct benefit or compensation of any form to me
- The information I give during the interview will be published in the thesis and in the website of Fulbright Finland Foundation
- I understand that the information I provide will be confidentially handled with anonymity
- I am aware that I am free to withdraw my participation in the interview at any point

- I am not obliged to provide answers to questions I do not feel comfortable about
- The questions will be sent to you some days before the interview in proper. This will help familiarize you with the subject and structure of the interview. Yet, the structure of questions might not be strictly respected during the interview depending on how you provide responses to the questions. For instance, your one response might already provide answers to more than one question in the outline.

Thank you so much!

Nsame Catherine,

Masters in Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MaRIHE), Candidate

University of Tampere, Finland

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2. Interview Questions

Introduction

This interview is about the professional and intercultural capabilities of Finnish Fulbright returnees in the development of their fields of specialization in Finland. The purpose is to explore the professional skills, intercultural skills, and social values that the graduates acquired in the U.S. during their Fulbright term. And, to understand how the skills are being transferred at work in Finland to advance various fields of specialization. The aim of the interview is also to identify some factors that may hinder the returnees' potential to utilize and transfer the skills and values practically in their home country. The study seeks to discover some proposed suggestions by the returnees, which could help ameliorate the process of skills and competences utilization and transfer by Fulbright returnees to their home country.

Questions

A. Questions about professional skill(s) utilization

1. Please, give reasons why you choose to apply for the Fulbright program in the U.S.?
2. Could you tell me about your previous and current positions at work?
3. Which professional skills did you gain during your Fulbright term in the U.S.?
4. How helpful were these skills to your employability in Finland after your Fulbright term?
5. How do you think your use of professional skills acquired in the U.S. during your Fulbright term have contributed to the development of your field of specialization in Finland?
6. Can you tell me a short story in which you used your professional skills either at your work place or somewhere else to create a great impact to the lives of individuals, groups, communities, etc.?

B. Questions on intercultural competences utilization

7. Could you please explain to me how useful the following intercultural attitudes you acquired in the U.S. have been to your interaction with people at your job and in Finland?
 - a) Respect for other cultures
 - b) Openness to people from different cultures
 - c) Curiosity to know and learn more about different cultures and the people
 - d) Discovery about new lifestyles
 - e) Comprehension of other language(s)

8. Could you give an example of a situation where you used your intercultural skills to impact the lives of individuals, groups, communities, etc.?

C. Questions about social values acquired in the U.S. during the Fulbright term

9. a) Are there some social values you acquired in the U.S. which you didn't possess before your Fulbright term?
 - b) If yes, kindly mention them
10. Could you tell me how these values helped improve your personal life?
11. Are there some challenges you encountered when utilizing those values in Finland?

12. How possibly could those challenges hinder your participation in promoting positive changes in your country?

13. Are there any recommendations you would like to make on how Fulbright returnees can effectively transmit skills and values gained during their Fulbright term, for the growth of their field of specialization and home country?

14. Do you have any comments or feedback related to this research you would like to share?